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## Universities and Professions in the Early Modern Period

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# **Universities and professions in the early modern period**

Rosemary O'Day

## **Abstract**

This article brings together old and new ideas and information to provide a different perspective than has so far prevailed upon the relationship between the universities and the professions in the early modern period. It focuses not only upon the direct impact of the so-called educational revolution upon the learned professions but also upon the indirect and less easy to quantify implications of that phenomenon.

## **Introduction**

In order to establish the influence of the early modern English universities upon the development of the so-called learned professions we must first accept that the relationship between the two was complicated rather than simple. In other words it is not a case of discovering whether or not Oxford and Cambridge themselves provided vocational training for professionals. It is not appropriate to focus exclusively upon the direct contribution of the universities to professional education and training or on attempts by the universities to interfere at an institutional level. Instead we must look also at how the influence of universities and colleges was spread throughout the professions, at how they helped shape the professional ethos and the future work and relationships of professionals. To do so, we need to think ourselves back into what was a very different society from our own, dominated by philosophies and norms distinct from our own. We need to build upon what is known about the catchment of early modern schools and colleges in order to arrive at a more nuanced picture of the relationship between educational institutions and society as a whole. Reference must be made to the role of the university faculties and the collegiate system; to the concepts of general and special vocations; to what we today term vocational training; to evidence of a common culture; to the role of lifelong friendships and sociability; to what must seem to us very strange notions of the accepted role of college fellows and scholars in the education of the young.

## **Oxford and Cambridge and the education of professionals**

At first sight it may seem that Oxford and Cambridge lost that control of the learned professions that they had in the late medieval period. As late as 1554 Roger Ascham was able to state: 'I know universities be instituted only that the realm may be served with preachers, lawyers and physicians'. Thereafter the universities had variable fortunes, affected as they were by external events, the reformation and the civil wars. These events had an impact upon total numbers in the universities and especially upon the number of BAs progressing to the higher faculties of theology, law and medicine that were taught at what we today call postgraduate level.

Statistics for the size of the universities are hard come by and oft disputed. The following table provides approximate figures for the size of Oxford and Cambridge at various points in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These statistics are only indicative, because they disguise the inadequacy of the sources upon which they are

based: contemporary estimates, figures that include undergraduates as well as fellows and scholars and figures that do not, historians' calculations based on matriculation registers, and so on. Comparable figures for both universities at any one time are rarely available. Runs of figures over two centuries are yet more hardly come by. Historians suggest that the early sixteenth century was also a period of expansion but there are no reliable estimates for numbers immediately preceding the reformation, thereby preventing us from making truly meaningful statements about the impact of the reformation on overall university numbers, although we may deduce that the impact was significant. The figures are enough however to show that it was possible to recover quickly from such crises; that both universities grew considerably in size over the period following the reformation; that Cambridge grew from a lower starting point than Oxford; and to suggest that much of the growth was in the numbers of students not funded by the university or colleges, that is, of what we today call undergraduates.

#### Undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge

|         | Oxford            | Cambridge         |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| c.1390s | 1500 <sup>1</sup> | 700 <sup>2</sup>  |
| c.1490s | 1700 <sup>3</sup> | 1300 <sup>4</sup> |
| c.1550s | 1150 <sup>5</sup> |                   |
| 1560s   | 1764 <sup>6</sup> | 1267              |
| 1570    | 1800              | 1630              |
| 1575    |                   | 1783              |
| 1617    |                   | 2270              |
| 1622    | c.3200            | 3052              |
| 1670s   | c.3200            | c.3000            |

Crises certainly hit the higher faculties at the reformation. Oxford, a university dominated by religious orders of monks and friars in the middle ages lost at least 800 members. The faculties of theology, medicine and law there were especially affected in the ensuing period. Theology lost considerable numbers although it remained the largest higher faculty. The removal of canon law from the curriculum and the uncertain future of the ecclesiastical courts meant that it was difficult to attract law students. By 1566 there were insufficient law students to fill the available dedicated fellowships and scholarships. Numbers thereafter considerably increased but a study of the civil lawyers has shown that there was a crisis in the university faculties between 1590 and 1610 linked to a shortage of professional opportunities.

Students pursued doctorates in the civil law not to quench their thirst for academic learning but to set themselves on the high road to rewards and preferments...The fate of the civil law as an academic study depended almost completely upon the availability and value of the offices for which the students were preparing themselves.<sup>7</sup>

The medical faculty was tiny – it had only 177 graduates during the entire sixteenth century. Perhaps most startling is the evidence for the decline in the number of BAs proceeding to what today we would call postgraduate study. 'In the decade after 1530, when the tensions of the royal divorce and the break with Rome took their full toll, the proportion of the known alumni who went on to graduate study dropped from almost 40% to just over half that figure.'<sup>8</sup>

Although a majority of new clergy in the period 1580-1640 were university students or graduates, relatively few had degrees in theology. Common lawyers obtained their vocational training in the Inns of Court in London. Physicians trained, for the most part, outside the universities. Entirely new professions such as the attorneys (ancestors of the solicitors), scriveners and civil servants grew up outside the universities as did specialisms such as surgery and pharmacy. Even those scholars who have pointed to the vitality of medicine, theology and civil law in the seventeenth century universities have concluded that this vitality was a function of the men involved and was not institutionally integrated.<sup>9</sup>

Closer examination however suggests that the picture itself is out of focus. The universities retained and even strengthened their control over parts of the ancient professions needing training in Theology and Civil Law. The MA, BD and DD remained an important to the career structure of part of the Church of England. A majority of higher clergy – that is, those in the richer pastoral livings and in positions of authority, such as rural deans, archdeacons and bishops – had degrees in theology from one of the universities and/or had held fellowships in one or more of their colleges. Of 11 graduates who held the prebend of Colwich in Staffordshire, for instance, all had an MA, six had a theology degree and four had held college fellowships. At Eccleshall, Staffordshire seven of the 15 prebendaries between 1554 and 1689 had held college fellowships. After the initial impact of the reformation the civil law saw a considerable revival until the early seventeenth century and it was the universities that provided the civil lawyers who served in the prerogative, university and ecclesiastical courts. The faculty suffered a further reversal during the seventeenth century, when opposition from the common law and the civil wars and interregnum saw the number of opportunities for civil lawyers drying up but the restoration saw a fresh resurgence. The universities also educated many of the more successful and prosperous physicians and licensed others. In London and the provinces medical men who acknowledged the importance of the Royal College of Physicians as a professional organisation nonetheless respected the imprimatur of a degree conferred by a university through its faculty of medicine.

In any event we should not be focusing exclusively upon the higher faculties (which continued to control certain professions) but instead upon the direct impact of university education upon generations of England's elite and upon the professions in particular. Of the large numbers of students who did not enter the higher faculties of the universities, many took a bachelor's degree – the percentage of freshmen taking this degree rose from 26% in the mid-sixteenth to over 40% in the early seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> Many students took the degree and entered the church, while others spent a year or two in a university college before moving on to the Inns of Court, into medical practice, into school teaching or into a private life spent in public service as Justice of the Peace, for example. Gentlemen, professionals and academics spoke the same language. Over many of these men the universities certainly retained no institutional control but they nonetheless exercised a continuing and powerful influence. The influence of the universities was felt more directly in some professions than others – of this there can be little doubt, especially the upper echelons of the clerical profession, the higher branches of both the civil and the common law, metropolitan medicine, the royal service. By a process of osmosis, however, this influence was also felt in the education, training and organisation of poorer parochial clergy, teachers, solicitors, attorneys, apothecaries, rural medical practitioners and others, at varying rates; and what we today would call the cascading effect was profound. The effect is difficult to measure although statistics of university attendance and subsequent careers

suggest its significance. There have been many debates about the nature of the early modern professions. The assumption here is that there were professions that were recognised as such by contemporaries and that were acutely aware of their own identity.<sup>11</sup>

We need to set both university education and the development of learned professions in their social and demographic context. The population of England fluctuated during the period 1540-1700. Broadly speaking it stood at 2.774 million in 1541 and had risen to 5.281 million by 1656; thereafter it slowly declined with only occasional rallies.<sup>12</sup> Actual doubling of the 1541 population was not reached until 1741. Historians since the 1960s have tended to see sixteenth-century England as a bi-partite society, in which a tiny group (between four and five per cent of the population) belonged to the gentry or above, owned between a third and a half of the land and even more of the nation's resources, and wielded power and controlled decision making. Change, however, was afoot.

In 1577 and 1587 William Harrison when describing the 'degrees of people in the commonwealth of England' found no place for professions with the exception of the clergy, yet one hundred years later Gregory King was in no doubt that six degrees of persons that today we would dub professional in character intervened between the leisured classes who did not work and those involved in trade, retail, craftsmanship, manufacture and agriculture. These six groups included churchmen, lawyers, physicians, bureaucrats, schoolteachers and officers in the navy and military.

Historians such as Peter Earle have identified the emergence of a middle class in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Earle's definition, by the early years of the eighteenth century between a fifth and a quarter of London households were middle class and of these between a quarter and a third were households of 'learned professionals' – 5000 lawyers, 1000 clergy, 3000 teachers and 100 physicians.<sup>13</sup> Having said this, be aware that professions in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the organisations that came to define them were not identical to their modern counterparts, were constantly developing and were highly segmented.

### **The educational revolution: its implications for the universities' community engagement**

There is a strong case to be made for educational expansion in early modern England – grammar school foundations multiplied (800 in the period 1480-1660); unendowed schools were yet more numerous and any figures that we have must be regarded as minima;<sup>14</sup> undergraduate numbers at the universities as we have seen grew considerably. It is less clear that this constituted a revolution, unless it be in record keeping. Probably the expansion of university education was already beginning in the later middle ages. It was nonetheless certainly built upon in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Education formed an early life stage – pupils in elementary and grammar schools fitted within the age range of four to 18 and most undergraduates at the universities within the range of 14-21 or 22. Not everyone was given a formal schooling, be it in a school or a home environment. Few pupils had a school career that lasted continuously from four or five till 18: much more commonly, pupils attended school for just a year or two, with only those from gentle or professional status groups having a more extended grammar school education. David Cressy inferred from the records of William Dugard's school at Colchester that the average

age of admission to a grammar school was about 12 years, with the large majority entering the school between the ages of nine and 13. Social class had a small effect upon age at admission: the higher the class the younger the age at entrance. Cressy noted that some of those who entered late had however migrated to Colchester from other grammar schools. On the basis of information in the college admission records at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge he was able to show that the average duration of students' studies at grammar school was about four-and-a-half years and that the somewhat shorter periods shown for some students could be explained by their having moved from one school to another.<sup>15</sup> Some, but by no means all, of these 'grammar' pupils would then progress directly to the universities. Many of them would be very young when they did so – 14, 15 or 16 years of age – but by the mid-seventeenth century most students who took the BA degree had begun their university studies around the age of 17.

Cressy and others showed that the social mix at grammar school was marked. The social composition of the undergraduate student body was also very varied. In part this was because of the traditional connection between the universities and the church's need for educated personnel. This need was to be met from able boys of relatively humble origin. In part it was because the late medieval and early modern universities began to attract and cater for the education of many gentry and nobility. Some historians – notably Lawrence Stone – argued that this influx of well-born students in the period 1560-1640 constituted an educational revolution. Others have been more cautious and explained that the influx in the late sixteenth century was probably more apparent than real, arguing that expansion in undergraduate numbers predated this.<sup>16</sup> Probably there had in the later middle ages been a sizeable number of well-born students but their presence had neither been recorded nor controlled. In about 1420 King's Hall, Cambridge, initiated the practice of teaching for a fee undergraduates who were not on a foundation so the presence of undergraduates was not novel. What was new was the emergence in the sixteenth century of more colleges and halls dedicated to the education of undergraduates. Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though, many students lived in the town not the college or hall and many do not appear in the university or college records.

**Social origins of Colchester Grammar School entrants<sup>17</sup>**

| Class             | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Gentry            | 51     | 31         |
| Clergy            | 27     | 16         |
| Other Professions | 5      | 3          |
| Tradesmen         | 64     | 39         |
| Yeomen            | 19     | 11         |
| Total             | 166    | 100        |

Undergraduate numbers at the universities were clearly flourishing in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The numbers suggest that the opportunity was seized by an increasing proportion of the individuals in the male year groups that could have afforded and aspired to it, and their servants or protégés. In 1500 about 300 new students entered the Universities. At the height of their popularity the two ancient universities combined attracted 1000 new undergraduates a year. Numbers reached peaks in the 1580s and '90s, 1620s, '30s and '70s that would never again be achieved until the nineteenth century when the country's population exploded.

Matriculations at Oxford and Cambridge indicate that the social composition of the universities was changing. Social composition varied between the colleges – Emmanuel and Jesus College, Cambridge, for example were much more aristocratic in complexion than Jesus, University or Magdalen Colleges at Oxford.

**Percentage of Oxford matriculations at gentry status or above**

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| 1575-79 | 39% |
| 1580-89 | 41% |
| 1590-99 | 50% |
| 1600-09 | 52% |

Cressy has shown that the matriculation records are seriously defective as a source for the social composition of the universities and are an especially 'insensitive indicator of social structure, especially below the level of the squirearchy'.<sup>18</sup> A quarter of students at Cambridge failed to matriculate. The Oxford matriculation registers recognised nobles, gentlemen and clergy but lumped everyone else in to the category of 'plebeian'. At Cambridge the matriculation registers gave the dining status of the student but not his social status. College Records at Cambridge often provide a much more accurate picture of the precise origins of undergraduates. About one third of Cambridge college entrants were of gentry status or above, about one-fifth were sons of clergy or other professionals; the remainder were sons of tradesmen, yeomen and husbandmen. These figures will always be simply indicative because we know that individuals sometimes overstated or understated their social status.<sup>19</sup>

**Age and origins by table status, Caius College entrants 1600-40<sup>20</sup>  
(percentages)**

| Table status     | Esquires,<br>knights,<br>lords | Gentry | Clergy,<br>professions | Trades | Yeomen | Husband-<br>men | Unknown | Median age |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------|---------|------------|
| Fellow commoners | 63                             | 31     | 2                      | 2      | 2      | 0               | 0       | 16.80      |
| Pensioners       | 22                             | 47     | 10                     | 9      | 2      | 2               | 9       | 16.79      |
| Scholars         | 3                              | 32     | 23                     | 15     | 13     | 4               | 11      | 16.87      |
| Sizars           | 0                              | 7      | 28                     | 18     | 18     | 12              | 17      | 17.24      |

Unsurprisingly the tendency of the elite to attend university had repercussions throughout society. The reach of university education within particular social and occupational groups extended considerably. For example, of working Justices of the Peace (i.e. those members of the county elites who were most active in county administration and justice) in 1562, 4.89% had attended university; by 1584 23.17%; by 1608, 40.5% and by 1636, 62%. The percentage rose to 80% if all members of the bench were considered. In the early seventeenth century over half of those who served as Lords Lieutenant or Deputy Lords Lieutenant had attended university. There were commensurate rises in the number of Members of Parliament who had attended university. Over half the MPs in the Long Parliament had attended university, as compared with just a quarter in 1563.

Let us consider more carefully the evidence that exists for social mixing and its implications in the universities and their colleges themselves. First of all, the elite believed in and were keen to maintain social segregation. Henry Peacham in 1622 counselled:

For the companions of your recreation, consort yourself with gentlemen of your own rank and quality; for that friendship is best contenting and lasting. To be over free and familiar with inferiours argues a baseness of spirit and begetteth contempt...<sup>21</sup>

and there are echoes of his advice in many contemporary letters from fathers and brothers to new students. Undergraduates of noble birth at Cambridge entered the colleges with the status of fellow-commoner.

Perhaps the most important privilege fellow-commoners enjoyed was that of eating and associating with the fellows and master of the college rather than with the remainder of the undergraduate body. If they followed parental advice they would mix with only 10% of the student body. The Gonville and Caius College statistics indicate that a high proportion of gentle and aristocratic parents were prepared to pay fees for this privilege and that even a few of professional or more humble origin were tempted to do so. Humfrey Busbey, an LLD of Eye, Suffolk, who had been a fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge for 23 years, was admitted a fellow-commoner at Caius in 1564 and allocated an upper cubicle alongside other fellows and fellow-commoners such as Nicholas Cobbe, Francis Dorrington and William Greene. Certain tutors (and certain colleges) were favoured to look after the sons of aristocrats because of their own good breeding. Sons and cousins of the gentry were educated at the universities in tandem. Walter Bagot (aged 20) and his brother Anthony (aged 19) of Blithfield, Staffordshire both matriculated at Merton College, Oxford, on 20 December 1577. Walter's sons Lewis, Harvey and William all attended Oxford in the early seventeenth century. Harvey was at Trinity College alongside his brother-in-law Thomas Broughton. Harvey's cousins Richard, Thomas and Oliver Cave were at other Oxford colleges during the same period. Harvey's sons Edward (18) and Harvey (17) matriculated at their father's old college Trinity in February 1634/5. There is evidence that some students even brought their own tutors to university with them, to ensure that they remained uncontaminated. The accommodation allocations survive for some Cambridge colleges and illustrate how social and local connections were continued in the living and teaching arrangements therein. Francis Dorrington, fellow of Caius and son of Robert Dorrington, gentleman, of Stafford, had in his charge and his chamber his brother, William, aged 18. Dorrington's other students came from gentle and merchant families in Suffolk, Huntingdonshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire and Norfolk.

Nicholas Cobbe, a Catholic student from Essex (who had matriculated as a sizar at Jesus College, Cambridge in 1551) and an ex-fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, entered Gonville and Caius College as a fellow-commoner in 1564. His education at Cambridge brought him a rise in social status at his new college. He brought with him several well-born, frequently Catholic, students from his home county. Most entered as fellow-commoners and pensioners and shared Cobbe's suite of rooms as well as in some cases his table and conversation. A group of them shared the fifth cubicle in Cobbe's suite. In all cases it was not only the gentility and youth but the Catholicism of these boys that was in need of protection.



**Chambers of Nicholas Cobbe of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, 1564** <sup>22</sup>

|                   |                        |    |                |  |                                      |
|-------------------|------------------------|----|----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Nicholas Cobbe    | Fellow commoner        |    | Roman Catholic | fellow of St John's & son of Avillus of Hedingham, Essex | 2 <sup>nd</sup> upper cubicle        |
| William Greene    | Fellow commoner        | 19 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Own cubicle                          |
| Richard Greene    | Litt. Grat.            | 11 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Own cubicle                          |
| Thomas Crawley    | Fellow-commoner        | 14 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Own cubicle                          |
| William Stoorton  | Litt. Grat.            | 16 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> lower cubicle |
| Edmund Arrabaster | Litt Grat. Pensioner   | 20 | ?              | Colchester School for 2 years                            | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> cubicle       |
| William Mannock   | Esquire                | 9  | ?              | home school in Suffolk                                   | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> cubicle       |
| Abraham Copwoode  | Litt. Grat.            | 11 | ?              | Gosfield School, Essex for 3 years                       | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> cubicle       |
| Thomas Chappline  | Litt. Grat & pensioner | 16 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> cubicle       |
| William Chappline | Pensioner              | 14 | Roman Catholic | Mr Greene of Sampford, Essex                             | Shared 5 <sup>th</sup> cubicle       |

Secondly, we should note that this counsel for social segregation was not necessarily obeyed and, even when it was, there were many ways in which the university and college experience were shared across the social spectrum. We have to look past the formal direction to the informal practice. It is here that the universities' and colleges' engagement with the community and specifically with the professions is to be located.

The example of Cobbe and his chamber mates in fact underlines one important way in which this engagement took place. The colleges were frequently microcosms of the county communities from which they drew most of their students. So intercollegiate rivalries evident physically in football matches and intellectually in disputations often took on a regional complexion. The colleges as landowners had vested interests in their county communities; these areas in their turn developed equivalent interests in the colleges. Fellows and officers made annual visits to county lands and had conversations with local administrators; alumni loaned money for college building projects and were rewarded with beneficial leases; local landowners supplied the colleges with provisions – for example the fishponds at Stowe and Finmere supplied New College, Oxford; benefactors endowed exhibitions for pupils from certain schools to attend given colleges – in Yorkshire, for example, many schools had closed scholarships to named Cambridge colleges and created a system of feeder schools that ensured a continuing regional connection between the North and Cambridge; informal connections between schools and colleges in East Anglia were built upon the local influence of Cambridge alumni and the geographical proximity of the university itself.

**School connections of freshmen at Jesus, King's, Emmanuel  
and St John's Colleges Cambridge<sup>23</sup>**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1090  | Freshmen                               |
| 800   | Early connections with college chosen  |
| c.450 | School connections with college chosen |

A student's experience of college life reinforced these local connections – awareness of dependence on local munificence was heightened by portrait galleries and prayers; regional dialects emphasised the difference between one house and another; after graduation the Act or the Great Commencement in July, The St Giles Fair in Oxford, or the Stourbridge Fair in Cambridge each September provided formal and informal opportunities for alumni to re-establish connections with their colleges. During the Long Vacation, which by the 1570s had become normal, college fellows were drawn into the life of the counties, attending the Midsummer Quarter Sessions, joining in the festivities surrounding the summer Assizes and participating in the house parties held by the county notables who were, so often, the fathers of their students or alumni.<sup>24</sup>

We must not, of course, exaggerate the closed nature of the universities or colleges. Both fellows and undergraduates extended their range of connections through their university experience. No college was exclusively composed of students from a restricted area. The commoners of Trinity College, Oxford, in the later sixteenth century hailed from no fewer than 29 counties.<sup>25</sup> There was ample opportunity for the young gentleman there to broaden his experience and for the servitor or plebeian student to form patronage connections outside his native area. There is evidence that college afforded many a degree of geographical mobility. The ordination lists of London suggest significant mobility via the university from Yorkshire to the South East.<sup>26</sup> Then again, we must not ignore the role of common curriculum and ethos in giving students and graduates a common intellectual baggage that was at least as pervasive as their sense of regional distinctness. If England did not become homogeneous as a result of the common education of her rulers, she was at least less heterogeneous as a consequence of it.

Gentle interest in university education influenced the social composition of the total student body, but scholars are unsure precisely how. In the early sixteenth century a majority of students were plebeian in origin.<sup>27</sup> In the period 1560 to 1640 there was overall an increase in the proportion of admissions from elite groups and from clergy families and a commensurate decline in the plebeian. But despite this about two-fifths of the student population were drawn from non-gentle and non-clerical families. The emergence of students with a clergy background was unsurprising as the Reformation brought with it little improvement in the economic conditions of the clergy, appreciation of the value of education, a gradual acceptance of a married clergy and the resulting numbers of their offspring. There were many scholarships available to support poor students at the university as well as a duty incumbent upon higher clergy, nobility and gentry to give such aid – a duty that was apparently taken seriously.<sup>28</sup> By the early seventeenth century a declining recruitment from the artisan and yeoman classes was compensated for by increased recruitment from clerical families. The clergy favoured university education for their children (and, pertinently, often saw the ministry as their natural destination). Most but not all sons of clergy would claim clerical status when they matriculated.<sup>29</sup> Many would table with gentlemen. By the mid-eighteenth century nearly a third of Oxford matriculands came from rectories.<sup>30</sup>

The figures showing the origins of Cambridge scholars are indicative rather than robust because information is not available for a majority. They do suggest that by the seventeenth century boys from clerical families were dominating sources of funding in the colleges although there were still some places available to support the sons of artisans and yeomen (by the same date, of 751 Cambridge fellows 280 claimed clergy status on entry). Anderson and Schapner argued that after 1870 the clergy acted as a very marked channel of social mobility, their sons moving into other occupations frequently and 'with minimum of concentration' in any one profession, and the number of clergy sons entering the church scarcely exceeding chance. It would be dangerous to assume, therefore, that all these 'clergy status' fellows and scholars were destined themselves for church careers. It is interesting that impecunious gentry were also not above seizing opportunities for institutional funding. As late as the early eighteenth century, when two of the nephews of James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, were to be educated at university the Duke paid for one while the other found provision on the foundation. A social mix in the colleges was apparent on the foundations themselves as well as among the remainder of the undergraduate body.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Origins of Cambridge scholars 1596-1645**

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Scholars at Cambridge           | 686 |
| Social status details available | 265 |
| Gentry status                   | 98  |
| Clergy status                   | 111 |
| Plebeian status                 | 56  |

#### **Origins of Cambridge fellows 1596-1645**

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Fellows at Cambridge | 751 |
| Clergy status        | 280 |

The majority of people in England and Wales were still excluded from a university education. The plebeian students (who represented a sizeable percentage of all students) formed a tiny percentage of those who fell into the middling layers of society – peasantry made up 60-70% of the nation, for instance. This was certainly not universal university education. On the other hand, the universities *did* educate distinct groups of students for differing social roles: nobility and gentry (many of whom went on to acquire a legal education); and clerical and plebeian entrants to several professions – church, teaching, law and medicine. The university degree itself had varied importance to different social categories of entrant and perhaps the eventual career of those students.

#### **Percentage of Cambridge students from different social groups completing degrees 1596-1645**

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Gentry sons   | 34.4% |
| Clergy sons   | 82.5% |
| Plebeian sons | 77.4% |

So the universities were expanding in size and changing in composition, with an increasing emphasis upon undergraduate education and provision. Colleges were

becoming more and more important in this context. There was a social mix within the universities and their colleges. Segregation, desired by the elite, was not achieved and the university/college experience was shared.

### **The universities: vocations, careers and professions**

It is clear that undergraduates were not all destined for the same career or profession. We hear a good deal today about vocational education and vocational subjects. When studying England in earlier centuries, and specifically the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it is important to recognise that *all* education and *all* subjects were vocational. Vocation, however, was understood in a very different way from today and within a Christian framework. Every individual had a *general Christian* vocation or calling – simply put, to follow Christ and his teachings. But each Christian also had a *special* vocation, whether to be a doctor of medicine or a drover; a lawyer or a baker; a pastor or a ploughman.

One of the recognised vocations was that of being a gentleman. The gentleman's calling was altruistic – for the good of society or commonweal as it was termed, as well as in his, and his family's and connection's interests. There was an enormous emphasis upon the need for education (which was provided for by teachers, schools, universities and books). The skills the gentleman practised were non-manual and involved the giving of advice based on intellectual expertise as well as experience and also the execution of magisterial duties. Historian Arthur Ferguson called this 'active citizenship' and 'applied learning'. So Thomas Elyot in his *The Boke Named the Governor* entitled one chapter 'The education or form of bringing up of the child of a gentleman which is to have authority in a public weal'. This ethic was passed on to the learned professions during the sixteenth century. So Ralph Rokeby, a lawyer of Lincoln's Inn, addressed his own kin in 1565 in a detailed memoir designed to preserve the tradition of public service and beneficence and in the 1590s wrote yet another version for the next generations.

*Direct* teaching about vocation and about how to recognise what was one's special vocation blossomed in this period in response on the one hand to the teaching of continental and home grown reformers such as Luther and Latimer and on the other to socio-economic change within England. Some of the most important contributors to this thought (in speech as well as in literature) were working within a university *milieu*. I note here William Perkins whose sermons in the university church of Cambridge on this subject were turned into extremely well-thumbed and influential Works. But not all of it – *The Attorney's Academy*, *Tom of All Trades* and *The Art of Thriving* (which went into many editions from the 1620s onwards) were written by a lawyer.

Additionally many undergraduates came under Ramist influence, with its marked emphasis on the social utility of knowledge, at late sixteenth-century Cambridge and at Magdalen College, Oxford. Through the media of English Protestant translations the ideas of Pierre de la Ramée (Peter Ramus) affected numerous sermons and printed works. The principal producers of graduate clergy were especially under the spell of Ramism – notably Emmanuel and St John's Colleges at Cambridge.<sup>32</sup>

It was not only direct and explicit teaching about vocation that was important. More influential perhaps was the educational environment in which young people were placed, both before and after they settled upon a profession. We need to consider inhibitions placed upon individual choice by social class and by parents and teachers,

but also the broadening of horizons that may have led some young people to hold out for their calling despite such pressures.

When it came to supplying the educational needs of those entering or planning to enter specialised vocations, the response of the universities was, to put it mildly, hesitant. Changes in the content of the curriculum during the period largely affected only the education of future clergymen, schoolteachers and civil lawyers who studied the whole curriculum and took the BA. This hesitant response to change was in large part because academic institutions, even at that date, were hidebound by lumbering bureaucracies, vested interests and traditions. Also, renaissance humanists themselves had not seen the plebeian (and ecclesiastically dominated) universities of the sixteenth century as the ideal location for the education of the elite public servants – instead they called for the establishment of separate academies in the capital modelled on the Inns of Chancery and Court. When these plans fell through, existing institutions outside the universities were colonised.

There was one part of the universities that was recent and vibrant – the provision in colleges and halls for increasing numbers of young undergraduates, not all of whom had aspirations to become clergymen. Of the 16 colleges existing in Cambridge in 1642, six had been founded and two re-founded and expanded since 1485. Six of Oxford's 15 colleges were post-1500 foundations. It was here in the colleges, informally, that tutors and parents appear to have made an attempt to identify the specific vocations of their charges and to prepare them for these in some way. Historians find it extremely difficult to penetrate the documentation at this level. University and college records can tell us only so much. The private notebooks and accountbooks of both tutors and students survive in small numbers and are much more revealing. Much more work needs to be done now using correspondence between parents and tutors, parents and sons, tutors and students – which does survive in scattered archives – to gain more understanding of the process of choosing a vocation and determining in what manner and in what place preparation would best take place.

In the early modern period college fellows and scholars were not the same as their modern counterparts. Fellows were quite often young and had not yet achieved either BA or MA status. They were generally in orders and often had limited external experience. Outright sale of fellowships and scholarships was prevalent if not condoned: in 1576 John Whitgift petitioned William Cecil against the practice. Even when they had not purchased their positions fellows frequently owed them to accidents of birth and or to the direct and indirect patronage of individuals with no interest in or knowledge of scholarship:

*Salisbury MSS*

*7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1609 Letter to Robert Cecil from Jane Jobson of Brantingham:*

There is a fellowship in Queen's College, Cambridge proper only to Yorkshire and the diocese thereof, likely ere long to be void. Vouchsafe your letters unto the Master and Fellows ... in the behalf of my husband's nephew, Abdias Cole, that he might be preferred thereunto. He is Master of Arts of three years continuance in Trinity College, Cambridge ... I am not only his aunt by marriage, but in younger years I had him for my child and bestowed his education. Wherin I am able I still endeavour his preferment, allowing now unto him part of his maintenance. His father ... was not unknown to your father, and I doubt not but your Honour's self does remember him.<sup>33</sup>

The career of William Whitaker (1547/8-95), St Paul's School and Cambridge-educated, and a well-connected Calvinist theologian, anti-catholic propagandist and

Master of St John's College, Cambridge, owed much to his close familial and scholarly relationship with Alexander, Laurence and Robert Nowell and with Laurence Chaderton.

In addition some, perhaps many, students were placed in the care of other students rather than college fellows. (Generally this kind of information is obtained not from systematic records but from surviving correspondence between parents and tutors.) All tutors, whether fellows or not, had an eye *either* on further preferment within the college and university system (where opportunities were limited) *or* outside. For so many of these fellows regional connections provided the path to future preferment – the way out of a celibate clerical life in college to a career in one of the professions – an ecclesiastical curacy or benefice; a teaching position; or administrative, medical or legal practices.

Examples of individuals who found patronage through their student charges include Cardinal Wolsey, who in October 1500 obtained his first benefice (Limington, Somerset) from the Marquis of Dorset, whose sons he had taught. They continue throughout the period. Dr Joseph Hunt was tutor to John Marquis of Carnarvon, elder son of the First Duke of Chandos, while he was at Balliol College, Oxford, in the 1700s. The Duke continued to support Hunt long after John left Oxford and Hunt eventually became Master of the College with Chandos's patronage.

Fellows sought after responsibility for well-connected students as a valuable addition to their income and prospects. (Inevitably tutors came to regard well-connected pupils as a prize for which they would be prepared to fight – even on occasion going to law to secure them!)<sup>34</sup> They would follow direction from their employers – the student's parents – and direct their offspring appropriately both in terms of reading within the university and of advice – sending many off to the Inns of Court, for example. While, doubtless, many did consider the interests of their college, they also served these other employers and their own self-interest. We see, for instance, President Kettle of Trinity College, Oxford, advising young Harvey Bagot to leave the university for the Inns of Court. Many tutors seem to have had a year-round responsibility for their student charges: Thomas Wolsey spent the Christmas vacation in 1499 with the family of his students (sons of the Marquis of Dorset); Harvey Bagot's younger brother William in 1621 was one of the many who resided with their tutors (either in the country or in the university) during the long summer vacations. This last practice appears to have prevailed in the sixteenth century also: in the 1580s John Temple of Stowe, Buckinghamshire, tried hard to exert influence on his 15-year-old son-in-law's upbringing by insisting that the youth left his grandmother's home at Hillesden and returned to the care of another son-in-law, Paul Risley, at Oxford in July 1589. In the early eighteenth century tutors often accompanied young gentlemen on their foreign and domestic tours: Dr Stuart of All Souls College, Oxford, had partial charge of John Marquess of Carnarvon for 3 years, accompanied him on a grand tour in 1723, tended him through severe illness and, through the intervention of two noble women – the Duchess of Chandos and Lady Anne Coventry – became tutor to the young Duke of Beaufort on his tour abroad in 1723-4.

It is impossible to do more than speculate about the extent of *tutors'* impact upon the future of their charges when compared to that of students' families and friends. We do know that some fellows of colleges made it their business to watch out for talent among their acquaintances and connections outside the universities. For example, John Foxe (1516/7-1587), the martyrologist, reputedly owed his education at Brasenose College, Oxford, to the generosity of John Hawarden, former fellow and

rector of Foxe's home parish of Coningsby. Much later, Isaac Archer recorded that in 1656

Mr Dearsley, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and acquainted with my father ... visited my father also just at the time when I had sent him a Latin epistle to desire him once more that I might be a scholar; Mr Dearsley liked the letter so well that he perswaded my father to send mee to the universitye, which he then yielded to.

Archer's father, a minister, had sought previously to apprentice Isaac to a linen draper.

There is also evidence of the continuing relationships between men in the universities and those who had left to follow careers in one of the nascent professions. In about 1573 Gabriel Harvey corresponded with Humphrey Hales, a recent graduate from Pembroke College, Cambridge, who had become a schoolmaster. Hales had asked Harvey for advice about curriculum and method and Harvey responded with general advice and two relevant books:

I had thought to have sent you a pretty treatise of Henry Schorus touching the ordering of his school, being in a manner an extract of Ramus' worthy oration *Pro Philosophica Parisiensis Academiae Disciplina*, but surely it was not to be gotten amongst all our stationers, and mine own I gave away to a friend of mine above a month ago.<sup>35</sup>

This example points to the key role that such relationships may have played in disseminating new scholarship and books long after graduates had left the university.

At a more general level, friendships made at university frequently provided the basis for lifelong relationships and career furtherance. Some of these were friendships between tutors and undergraduates; others between students who were exact contemporaries, some of them dating back to county and even to grammar school. Just a cursory examination of Tudor and Stuart biographies in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* demonstrates that there was a continuing impact of such relationships upon the careers of professionals and upon their networks. Some were old friends: John Foxe and Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's, who shared a room as undergraduates at Brasenose College, Oxford; William, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Paget, Thomas Wriothesley, Anthony Denny and John Leland were pupils at St Paul's School and then undergraduates together at Cambridge; Reginald de la Pole and his tutors William Latimer and Thomas Linacre. Some became fellow-travellers: John Bale and Thomas Cranmer at Jesus College, Cambridge; John Jewel, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Nicholas Ridley, Thomas Cranmer and John Parkhurst through connections at both Oxford and Cambridge and during their service to Protestantism; Thomas Bentham and Thomas Lever at Cambridge, then as Protestants during Mary's reign, then as members of the hierarchy in Coventry and Linfield diocese; Hugh Latimer and Rowland Taylor at Cambridge and then in the diocese of Worcester. Some formed patronage bonds: Thomas Tusser, agricultural writer, musician and poet, who obtained the patronage of William, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Paget, after their association at Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Thomas Wolsey and Edward Fox; William Cecil and John Whitgift; William Cecil and Walter Travers, who became tutor to Robert Cecil, and was later protected by Burghley and preferred to the Provostship of Trinity College, Dublin; John Whitgift and his erstwhile student Gervase Babington, Bishop of Worcester; Whitgift and another former student, William Morgan, later bishop of Llandaff and

translator of the Bible into Welsh. In April 1578 Edmund Spenser was to find employment and a home in the household of Dr John Young, Bishop of Rochester, who had been Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, when Edmund was a poor student there. Long-term friends Spenser made at Pembroke included his mentor Gabriel Harvey and Lancelot Andrewes. Sir Thomas Smith when he was born the second son of a middling Saffron Walden sheep farmer can scarcely have expected a future career as scholar, diplomat, political theorist and secretary of state but his entry at 13 to Queens' College, Cambridge, set him on that trajectory. His intellectual ability and political ambitions helped but the fact that he was tutor to pupils who included William Cecil was no hindrance to a man who was often abrasive and never fitted in well at court! Notably he served as Secretary of State alongside Burghley, acting as 'an intermediary between him, the queen, and ambassadors'. Some formed enmities: simply studying or serving together on the foundation of a college did not imply a harmonious relationship and for some working with those who achieved power and influence brought anything but good fortune. The example of John Whitgift, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Walter Travers, junior fellow, whom he 'persecuted' from the 1560s to the 1590s, is indicative.<sup>36</sup>

Some scholars have argued that, while at university, gentlemen and prospective lawyers (frequently of gentle extraction themselves) followed a different course of study from that pursued by students intent upon taking a degree and entering the clergy as a career. In fact, there was no *formal* difference in the courses they undertook, although the course for the gentleman was truncated. It was assumed that gentle youths were already sufficiently well educated not to need further education in grammar and so their studies concentrated on rhetoric and logic. For this reason, the universities permitted gentle students to graduate in the BA in three, not four, years if they wished to do so. In rhetoric and logic they would, in any event, as long as they remained for two years, reach graduate standards. The main differences were four: tutors of well-born students provided additional tuition in what might be called 'modern' subjects such as history or vernacular literature, geography and travel; such students were to some extent kept separate from other students in the ways suggested earlier; they frequently curtailed their university studies after about a year or 18 months; and it didn't matter terribly much whether they excelled in the university exercises.

Many of these young men never had any intention of completing degree studies or entering the church at the end of their time at university. Why did they go? They went to complete a grammar school education and perhaps to identify their vocation. They went to acquire useful learning. Tutors were able to explain to them of what such learning consisted: as Gabriel Harvey wrote to Arthur Capel in 1573:

I would have gentlemen to be conversant and occupied in those books, especially, whereof they may have most use and practice, either for writing and speaking, eloquently or wittily, now or hereafter. Farewell, good Mr Arthur, and account of learning, as it is to be one of the fairest and goodliest ornaments that a gentleman can beautify, and commend himself withal.<sup>37</sup>

They went to form useful connections. They went with a view to moving on to the next stage – to a knowledge of the law which would prove so useful in their future lives as gentlemen of property or to become practising lawyers or to a knowledge of medicine that would be similarly useful. Sir Thomas Temple of Stowe, Bucks, who matriculated at University College, Oxford, in June 1582, was moved to Lincoln's Inn



in 1584 specifically to equip him to serve his father John as a legal advisor on the spot. Some of the surviving correspondence demonstrates his usefulness in this capacity. He preserved this tradition of ensuring that there was a lawyer in this litigious family by seeing that his third son Thomas coupled his theological studies at Oxford with studying and eating dinners at his father's Inn. Grandsons and great-grandsons of Sir Thomas followed the family tradition of combining a year or so's study at Oxford with meaningful time at the Inns of Court. Another relative (the youngest son of Thomas Denton, mentioned earlier) attended Oxford but served the family and the connection by training in medicine and ministering to the needs of relatives and friends. Paul D'Ewes, Simonds' the diarist's father, had attended both college and Middle Temple. He was called to the Bar in 1598. He never practised as a barrister in the central courts but his legal connections brought him a position in the nascent civil service and he also exercised legal jurisdiction in his own manorial court at Lavenham. It was natural for his son to follow the same tradition.

For large numbers of these students their eventual professional preparation continued outside the universities in a quasi apprenticeship context, whether or not organised and controlled as through the Inns of Court and Chancery or the London, later the Royal, College of Physicians.

### **University and Inns of Court**

A pattern of combining education at university and Inn of Court nevertheless was beginning to be set by the mid-sixteenth century and probably well over half of those registering at the Inns of Court by the later seventeenth century had attended the university before hand. (For example, most of the Bagots who attended Oxford also studied at an Inn of Court.) A large majority of those at the Inns had had a grammar school education and so shared some part of the classical education experienced by these former undergraduates. Very few had followed the old route of practical training in the courts and membership of a junior Inn of Chancery prior to membership of an Inn of Court.

Edward Coke, author of the famous and influential *Institutes* and one of the most controversial judges of the period, had also spent a few years at the university prior to entering a junior Inn of Court and eventually the Inner Temple. He provides us with an excellent example of the professional lawyer intent upon emphasising his humanist, classical education. When he quoted the Bible he generally quoted the Vulgate. It was in Latin that he composed serious verses – to commemorate his son's wedding, or to while away confinement in the Tower. He knew his classical authors well: Virgil, Cicero, Tacitus, Ovid, Sallust, Seneca. Yet he also invented an intellectual pedigree for the English common law and was an advocate of the efficacy of the English language in a legal context.

The common law in the early sixteenth century was not and never had been an academic discipline. Lawyers learned technique, not law. Written law, statute law and precedent were relatively unimportant. By the middle of the seventeenth century this had changed: the law was an intellectual discipline. This is a fascinating subject in its own right. At least as worthy of consideration is the impact which university education had upon the men who eventually led the legal profession. There is a good deal of evidence that the year or so that many of these young men had spent in the universities had a profound influence not only upon themselves and their later lives but also upon the institutionalisation of the profession itself. Some of these graduate and undergraduate student lawyers tended to continue their studious habits within the

Inns and to assume leadership positions therein. Their eventual importance to professional development may well have been disproportionate to their actual numbers. We must be careful here because other influences were also at work – the invention of the printing press and the availability of printed books, for example. Nevertheless, changes that had occurred in undergraduate education penetrated the Inns of Court and Chancery and, eventually, the more scattered vocational training grounds of parochial clergy, physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and solicitors.

### **Study habits learned at college**

Ex-university students entered the Inns already imbued with what they had learned at university and college, and accustomed to given study methods that differed markedly from those traditionally practised in the Inns. The college student was used to private study and small discussion groups – to relying on books, reading guides, commonplacing, cataloguing, and listening to private lectures, rather than exclusively on formal commentaries and occasional learning exercises. The first legal text book directed at law students was published in 1600 – Fulbecke's *A Direction* – and marked not the beginning but the culmination of a movement towards private study of the law, sometimes with and sometimes without the help of a tutor. Commonplacing, taught at college, had a profound influence on the study habits of all early modern professionals. It was upon their training and expertise that lawyers, like other professionals, rested their claim to serve society.

Simonds D'Ewes, when he was fresh from Cambridge and long afterwards, spent the mornings studying law and preparing for moots, and the afternoons on humanistic and religious studies. At Lincoln's Inn, Thomas Egerton, who eventually became Lord Chancellor of England, developed more fully the general interests in law, history and philosophy that he had begun in tutorials at Oxford, as well as his practical expertise in the common law. At more aristocratic Gray's Inn, Edward Waterhouse spent just three hours of a 16-hour day studying law and a high proportion of the remainder on rhetoric, logic, history, literature, and sport; when he was practising law, William Drake continued the habit of commonplacing, reporting cases he had heard and opinions he had solicited; he learned from others how best to keep his notes in order and how to approach certain difficult topics through both reading and direct observation. He observed that it was necessary to reserve study for the vacations because it served to distract him from legal practice.<sup>38</sup> These were men actively involved in legal practice who nonetheless saw part of their vocational preparation for active citizenship and applied learning to be a continuance of their humanistic education. William Drake provides an excellent example of a university-educated legal practitioner who, when he became a prominent landowner, MP and author, nevertheless spent a good deal of his time in continued study (and, in his case, in collecting the papers of Francis Bacon).<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between teacher and taught, and the evolution of teaching and learning methods, both found their echoes in the Inns of Court. Many university colleges in the 1570s introduced a formal requirement that a student must be attached to a tutor. The beginnings of the formal tutorial system can be traced at certain Oxford colleges: Exeter College from 1564, at Balliol from 1574, at Brasenose from 1576 and at University College from 1583.<sup>40</sup> This was at a time when the universities' own formal lectures had ceased to have much importance. Instead the disputations remained dominant in undergraduate and MA education – as student notebooks testify – and their format seems to have had an impact upon the legal moots and clerical

exercises and conferences. In college students heard informal lectures and read with their tutors in preparation for their disputations. They wrote out their arguments (precursors of the undergraduate essay) before delivering them orally. Several tutors' guides for student study are still in existence.

Small group teaching appears to have migrated from the colleges to the Inns of Court. Between 1595 and 1619 John Hoskyns of the Middle Temple had under him 14 young students of the law, many of them drawn from his native Herefordshire and the Welsh borders. At his term-time moots he would act as judge, licensed barristers argued the cases and these students recited pleadings they had learned by rote. In the vacation moots, these same students had to argue the cases themselves. To prepare for these moots, students often hired private tutors.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of a lawyer who changed the face of professional education for lawyers is provided by Edmund Plowden, who appears to have spent three years at Cambridge before being admitted to the Middle Temple in about 1538. Reputedly he was so studious that he did not leave the Inn once during the space of three years. He began recording cases he heard in court from at least 1550, the same year in which he gave law readings (on entails and replevins) at New Inn. In 1571 Plowden published his volume of law reports on cases heard in the reigns of Edward, Mary and Elizabeth that decisively broke out of the older year-book tradition. The keys to Plowden's approach were two resolutions he claims to have made back in 1538. The first was:

[to] be present at, and to give diligent attention to, the debates and questions of law, and particularly to the arguments of those who were men of the greatest note and reputation for learning. The second was, to commit to writing what I heard, and the judgment thereupon, which seemed to me to be much better than to rely on treacherous memory (*Les commentaries*, preface).

Plowden appears to have produced and published the reports as a student guide for those studying law. He concentrated upon special verdicts, which threw up particularly problematic points in law; he did not quote verbatim, but he did preface each report with a transcription of the pleadings from the court record, and he verified the accuracy of the arguments presented by consulting the judges and other lawyers who had made them, sometimes showing them his version for approval. Although the book contains some of his own cases, there are only one or two lengthy expositions of his own views, most notably that in connection with the application of principles of equity to the interpretation of statutes. Plowden claimed that he published in the first place because manuscript versions, some of them corrupt, were circulating widely. The second edition, which included additional cases, was printed in 1578, along with an analytical index compiled by Recorder William Fleetwood. The work was subsequently reissued many times, with some later editions containing in addition Plowden's *Queries*, a collection of moot points that was published from manuscript for the first time in 1620. Plowden's name was held in high regard. Sir Edward Coke approvingly referred to him in his *Institutes* as a 'sage of the law'.<sup>41</sup>

Connections and friendships made at school and university continued throughout the lives of professionals. D'Ewes, Egerton and John Hoskyns offer excellent examples. For many, sharing of chambers at college and Inn provided a route to preferment and to good marriages.<sup>42</sup> John Manninham, who had studied at and graduated from Cambridge, joined the Middle Temple in March 1598. While there he shared a chamber with Edward Curle. In 1605 he was called to the degree of

Utter Barrister and married Anne Curle, the sister of his chamber mate. Through this marriage he obtained a position at the Court of Wards and Liveries, where his father-in-law was Auditor.

The mingling of law students with men of connection who had no intention of practising law was very important for a budding legal practitioner – providing patrons and clients. For example, Ascham, Frobisher, Raleigh, Inigo Jones and Francis Drake were all members of the Inns and ate dinners there. Because the Inns were also London homes for many county families, they helped extend the social reach of young lawyers – it was not uncommon for young and old women to be in residence, for example.

### **A graduate profession – the clergy**

The clergy provide the first example of that modern phenomenon, the move towards becoming a graduate profession. In the middle ages members of the church hierarchy had often been highly educated men but parish clergy, who were not on this ladder to preferment (beneficed and unbeneficed), had rarely been so. Parochial clergy were often described as ignorant of the scriptures and barely literate or Latinate. The situation was deplored by Elizabethan bishops and puritans alike, who saw the existence of a learned ministry as crucial to the spiritual health of the nation. Various attempts were made to provide appropriate training for ministers *in situ*. Monarchy, bishops and puritans, however, were in their differing ways concerned to improve the quality of ministers at the level of initial recruitment. They did this by encouraging the ordination of graduates, and by working with the colleges to ensure the appropriate vocational preparation of students. This movement was gradual and progressed at differing rates in different parts of the country. For example, whereas mass ordinations in Oxford, Ely and London in the 1590s were already almost exclusively of graduates, those at Chester, Coventry and Lichfield were not. Even when recruitment was graduate, it took some time to have an impact at parochial level, because clergymen had life tenure and were often long-lived, and because of the insidious effects of the patronage system that operated with limited reference to the educational qualifications of beneficiaries. In 1584 only 14% of ministers in Coventry and Lichfield diocese were graduates; this had risen to 24% in 1603. In Coventry archdeaconry in 1584, 30% of clergy had attended university; by 1620 this had increased to 64%. In Surrey archdeaconry in 1603, of the 54 clergy presented to livings since 1591, 49 (92%) were graduates.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Graduate clergy in selected locations c. 1600**

| Date | Place                        | Number | Identified incumbents | Percentage |
|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1603 | Surrey Archdeaconry          | 98     | 142                   | 69%        |
| 1600 | Worcester diocese            | 56     | 157                   | 37%        |
| 1600 | Oxford diocese               | 100    | 152                   | 66%        |
| 1600 | Coventry & Lichfield diocese | 110    | 433                   | 25%        |
| 1600 | Lincoln diocese              | 102    | 646                   | 16%        |
| 1600 | York diocese                 | 454    | 1065                  | 43%        |
| 1601 | London diocese               | N/A    | N/A                   | 75%        |

Generally speaking, graduate clergy were more common at an earlier date in places within reach of London, Oxford and Cambridge but everywhere the picture was one

of improvement over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with a decline in the years c.1549 to c.1585 accounted for by a shortage of clerical recruits, as the figures for Surrey below indicate.

**Graduate clergy in Surrey 1520 to 1600**

| Date    | Number of graduates | Identified incumbents | Percentage |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1520-30 | 45                  | 132                   | 34%        |
| 1549-53 | 20                  | 140                   | 14%        |
| 1562    | 19                  | 84                    | 23%        |
| 1581    | 29                  | 98                    | 30%        |
| 1603    | 98                  | 142                   | 69%        |

Although it may appear that in educating the clergy the early modern universities were merely continuing their medieval traditions, in fact this was not the case. The medieval universities had educated the clerical elite – the hierarchy. Few resident parochial ministers were graduates. Foundations such as Corpus Christi College, Oxford – designed to produce educated parish clergy – represented a small move in the right direction. The much larger sixteenth- and seventeenth-century universities, through the colleges, concentrated a higher proportion of their energies on the education of the pastoral ministry. They were participating in a major revolution in what society was asking of its clergy.

The universities then had a direct role in educating the parish clergy of Elizabethan and Stuart England and Wales. The church hierarchy was not entirely happy to see this role in the hands of institutions over which it had imperfect control. (It is intriguing, for example, to view Archbishop Laud's reform of the Oxford statutes in this context.) While it became difficult to obtain preferment in the early Stuart church without a university degree, there were many attempts by individual bishops and other church dignitaries to offer more practical training to their clergy, especially their chaplains – Thomas Morton, John Cosin and Richard Kidder spring to mind. In addition, evidence survives of household seminaries run by prominent divines or other clergy who stood outside the established hierarchy – Richard Greenham, Thomas Gataker, Thomas Taylor, John Ball, Francis Higginson and Alexander Richardson. Others wrote books on how to perform the 'job' better – William Perkins' *The Art of Prophesying* of 1592 is a good example. Laurence Chaderton's *Excellent and Godly Sermon* criticised the idle parading of scholarship and the use of flamboyant rhetoric and gestures. Some of these men worried about the elite nature of the graduate clergyman's education and the emphasis upon humane scholarship to the detriment of the pastoral role; they were keen to improve the cleric's communication skills with a poorly-educated congregation.<sup>44</sup>

As with the lawyers, so with the clergy: it is important to look at the indirect influence of university and college education upon them. As a result of their education alongside gentry at the universities, the Elizabethan and Stuart clergy began to see themselves as gentlemen. The growth of clerical family dynasties (often through the universities), professional meetings, informal meetings, common educational background, and similar life-style to other graduate clergy certainly all served to strengthen the cleric's sense of belonging to a profession. This may have had a derogatory effect upon their relations with the plebeian laity, but it strengthened their sense of belonging to an educated elite that shared education, culture and ethos.

The clergy, while certainly not a unified profession, shared features of great importance: education, a sense of calling and commitment, a way of life. These features add up to a common culture, closely identified with that of the educated gentry and other learned professions. As a group the clergy were given to reflection upon their *raison d'être* – abundant documentary evidence of their professional work and their relationship with the gentry and other professionals. As more and more of the clergy passed through Oxford and Cambridge, this common culture and awareness of it intensified.

## **Conclusions**

Professions were jealous of their areas of expertise. Battles between common and civil lawyers have been highlighted by historians. Battles within other professions were no less frequent. Nevertheless, there is much evidence that professionals regarded one another highly and that, when other social groups turned against them (as during the middle of the seventeenth century), professionals found common ground.

There is also a good deal of data showing the common culture shared by gentlemen and professionals. This culture derived not only from a common education at university, of course – the classical curriculum of school and university was, however, at its root. Knowledge of Greek, Latin, philosophy and ancient history fed into the contemporary rhetoric practised by statesmen, the governing elite, lawyers and clergy alike; study of the scriptures was common to students at the university and continued among lawyers and gentlemen, as well as clergy. Moreover there was an awareness of a common professional ethos.<sup>45</sup>

To say that the universities lost control of the professions is too simple and far from accurate. They maintained a firm grasp on preparation for careers in the church and the civil law. New professions grew up outside the universities' formal control. However, the new professions were influenced by the universities in many ways, some formal and some informal. Leadership of the new professions often rested in university-educated men who revered learning. The ethos of the gentleman (which had developed at least in part at the universities) spread to the professions. The concept of cascading may seem especially appropriate when considering this influence.

This essay has not attempted to place university influences upon the development of the professions and professionals in relation to other undoubted influences upon them. Such a comparison would be difficult and, in any event, must await further attention.

As a result of the change of focus in this essay, there may appear a lesson to be drawn by today's educationalists. Although the universities tread dangerous ground when they exclude, whether intentionally or accidentally, *new* vocational specialisms from their formal curricula (as they appear to have done whether by accident or design in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), they may continue to exert a pervasive influence upon the value systems of those professions as long as these professional personnel have shared a common preparatory education in schools and universities. Too early specialisation in so-called 'vocational' subjects has become a feature of English – even British – education. The Americans retained that insistence upon a broad liberal arts education prior to specialisation that was a feature of both old and new professions in the early modern period. We, too, should see that such an education is not a selfish indulgence in pleasurable but useless studies, but should be a necessary and useful common education in the values we hold so dear as a society.

Moving students on more and more precipitously towards a 'useful' education – so that even our 11-year-olds engage in a so-called vocational curriculum – may turn out to be just the opposite to useful. It could result in a unifying educational curriculum turning instead into a divisive training agenda.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> T.H. Aston, 'Oxford's medieval alumni', *Past and Present* 74 (1977): 3-40.
- <sup>2</sup> T.H. Aston, G.D. Duncan and T.A.R. Evans, 'The medieval alumni of the university of Cambridge', *Past and Present*, 86 (1980): 9-86.
- <sup>3</sup> Aston, 'Oxford's medieval alumni'.
- <sup>4</sup> Aston, Duncan and Evans, 'The medieval alumni'.
- <sup>5</sup> James McConica, *The Collegiate University (The History of the University of Oxford* ed. T.H. Aston vol. 3) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 152.
- <sup>6</sup> McConica, *Collegiate University*, 154, citing Richard Stevens.
- <sup>7</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Civil Lawyers in England 1603-1641 A Political Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 51-53.
- <sup>8</sup> McConica, *Collegiate University*, 153-4.
- <sup>9</sup> Robert G. Frank Jr., 'Medicine' in *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke, (*History of the University of Oxford* vol. 4) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 507.
- <sup>10</sup> The huge dropout rate was owing in part to the large number of undergraduates who died or left university for financial reasons, and in part to the tendency of many deliberately to study just part of the course.
- <sup>11</sup> For a recent discussion see Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England: Servants of the Commonweal* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).
- <sup>12</sup> See E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871, A reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 edition), especially 208-9.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class, Business, society and family life in London 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), 60.
- <sup>14</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Church records and the history of education in early modern England 1558-1642: a problem of methodology', *History of Education* 2, no. 2 (1973): 115-132.
- <sup>15</sup> David Cressy, 'School and college admission ages in seventeenth-century England', *History of Education* 8 (1979): 170-1, 173.
- <sup>16</sup> For a particularly persuasive and elegant exposition of this argument see Elizabeth Russell, 'The influx of commoners into the University of Oxford before 1581: an optical illusion', *English Historical Review* 92 (1977): 721-745.
- <sup>17</sup> Cressy, 'Admission ages', 170.
- <sup>18</sup> Cressy, 'Admission ages', 173.
- <sup>19</sup> E.g. John Thurston was accorded the status of 'son of a gentleman' when he entered Colchester school in 1639 but when he entered St John's College, Cambridge in 1646 it was noted that his father was a Colchester mercer.
- <sup>20</sup> Cressy, 'Admission ages', 176.
- <sup>21</sup> Henry Peacham, *The compleat gentleman* (London: Francis Constable, 1622), 39-40.
- <sup>22</sup> J. and S.C. Venn, *Admissions to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge*, (London: C.J.Clay, 1887), s.n. Nicholas Cobbe.
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Tyler, 'The Children of disobedience: the social composition of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 1596-1645', (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1976), 40-2, 68, 75, 91. The number of students who followed their migrating tutors to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, is amply illustrated in Venn and Venn, *Admissions to Gonville and Caius*. It may be dangerous to extrapolate from this example to other colleges but there is no reason to believe that Caius was unusual.
- <sup>24</sup> See Victor Morgan, 'Cambridge University and the 'Country' in *The University in Society*, I, ed. L. Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 183-245, for a lively discussion.

<sup>25</sup> James McConica, 'Scholars and commoners in Renaissance Oxford' in Stone, *The University in Society, I*, 175. Emmanuel College, Cambridge drew heavily from Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Northamptonshire and Sussex; King's College, Cambridge, from Essex, Kent, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Wales.

<sup>26</sup> Guildhall London MS 9535/2; see Rosemary O'Day, *The English clergy* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 4-8, 137-9, for a discussion of the impact of university upon the geographical mobility of the clergy.

<sup>27</sup> Oxford matriculations appear to show the following pattern, according to C. Arnold Anderson and Miriam Schapner, *School and Society in England: Social backgrounds of Oxford and Cambridge Students*, (Annals of American Research) (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1952), 1-2.

| Date        | Plebeian | Sons of Clergy | Sons of Esquires & Country Gentry |
|-------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Late C16th  | 60%      | 1.2%           | 47%                               |
| Early C17th | 40%      | 12.6%          | N/A                               |
| Mid C17th   | 45%      | 12.6%          | 33%                               |

<sup>28</sup> Contemporary letters sometimes reveal that non-graduate gentry supported academics. See, for example, non-university-educated John Temple Esquire's support for Richard Slythurst, medical fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, as evidenced in the following correspondence: Henry E. Huntington Library (San Marino, California), STT 1816 Richard Slythurst, medical fellow of Brasenose, to John Temple of Stow, 17<sup>th</sup> December (probably 1580s) from Oxford: 'Worshipfull Sir If you even from your beginning to tender & support my shrunked & thinned estate had not been more forward than I have been speedy in returnyng to you a certificat of receveing your relief, I had oftener and more neerly been pinched with the lacke of your liberalitie, than you touched with the bestowing therof on mee. Wherin my present condition representeth the misery of olde Adam, turned out of paradise for that he so unkyndely forgot so high felicitie received: & contrarily yours the happines of the nue Adam Jesus Christe in whom God hath layd up for us the riches of his graces, redy ever to supplie the wants of our miserable bareness.'

<sup>29</sup> Fee differentials may have led some matriculands to understate their social status. For this see Cressy, 'Admission Ages', passim.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson and Schapner, *School and Society*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Henry E. Huntington Library, ST57, vol. 25, fo. 55: letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1724 from Duke of Chandos to Mr Brydges, noting that he should pay £100 to brother Chamberlayne for 'his eldest son's education at Oxford at 50 p.a....the other I think is chosen upon one of the Foundations & will not want such a supply from his frends'; Tyler, 'Children of disobedience', 114; tables in text based on his figures.

<sup>32</sup> For discussions of Ramism at the universities and its impact upon the clergy see Hugh Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Universities and Society in Pre-industrial England 1500-1700* (London: Faber, 1970), 46-70.

<sup>33</sup> Abdias Cole of Yorkshire was admitted scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1602; he proceeded to the B.A. in 1603/4, and the M.A. in 1607. His bid for a fellowship in 1609 was apparently not successful but he achieved his goal in 1611, when he obtained a fellowship at Queens' College, Cambridge, and was incorporated M.A. at Oxford. He remained a Fellow until 1618.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Letters from Daniel Featley in the period 1607-10 regarding disputed tuition, Daniel Featley to Dr Spencer, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford c. 1607-10, and Daniel Featley to Sir Walter Raleigh, n.d., Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MSS.

<sup>35</sup> E.J.L. Scott ed., *The Letter-book of Gabriel Harvey*, (London: Camden Society, 1884), 181.

<sup>36</sup> These details were drawn from the relevant articles in the *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; quotation from Ian W. Archer, 'Smith, Sir Thomas (1513-1577)',



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*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, Sept 2004); online edn., Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25906, accessed 28 Oct 2009]

<sup>37</sup> *Letter-book of Gabriel Harvey*, 168.

<sup>38</sup> For more on all these see O'Day, *The Professions*, 125-34 ; for William Drake see University College London, Bacon/Tottel Collection; The House of Lords Record Office, London, Historical Collections MS 49: commonplace book of Sir William Drake, c.1632; Buckinghamshire Record Office, Ref: D/DR/10/56: part of a notebook attributed to Drake; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, Folger MS v.a.263: Commonplace Book of William Drake, c.1645) and Henry E Huntington Library, Journal of William Drake, 1631-42. Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: the Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), covers Drake's reading throughout his life, including periods when he was a practising lawyer and periods when he was primarily a landowner.

<sup>39</sup> *Resuscitatio or Bringing Into Public Light Several Pieces of the Work ... of the Rt Hon Francis Bacon* (London: William Lee, 1657).

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'Size and social composition of the Oxford student body, 1580-1910' in Stone ed., *The University in Society*, I, 25-6.

<sup>41</sup> L.W. Abbott, *Law Reporting in England, 1485-1585*, (London: Athlone Press, 1973), 198-239; G. de C. Parmiter, *Edmund Plowden: an Elizabethan recusant lawyer*, (Catholic Record Society, Monograph Series, 4) ([London]: Catholic Record Society, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> O'Day, *The Professions*, 138-9.

<sup>43</sup> For Surrey and London data see Richard Christophers, 'Social and educational background of the Surrey clergy, 1520-1620' (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1975). A. Peel (ed.) *The Second Part of a Register I*, 1915 supplied figures for other locations. These were checked against data for Coventry and Lichfield diocese gathered from Lichfield diocesan records, notably *liber cleri* and the bishops' registers of institutions and the central records of the Lord Keeper's presentations and additional data derived from D.M. Barratt, 'Condition of the Clergy from the Reformation to 1660 in the dioceses of Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester' (unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, University of London, Oxford University, 1950), H.G. Owen, 'The London Parish Clergy in the Reign of Elizabeth' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1957) and C.W. Foster (ed.) *Lincoln Episcopal Records in the Time of Thomas Cooper*, Lincoln Record Society, II, 1912.

<sup>44</sup> For clerical networks and sociability see O'Day, *The English clergy, passim* and *The Professions*; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9-35, 122-48.

<sup>45</sup> For this see Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions*, 25-43, 255-272, esp. 257-8, and 'Social change in the history of education: perspectives on the emergence of learned professions in England, c. 1500-1800' in *Social Change in the History of British Education*, ed. Joyce Goodman, Gary McCulloch & William Richardson (London: Routledge, 2008), 7-26.